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SUBJECT: ARTIFICIAL CORAL REEFS: SHARING THE JORDANIAN
EXPERIENCE WITH OTHER RED SEA COUNTRIES

1. Summary: The Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) organized and hosted a September 27-29 regional meeting in Aqaba entitled "Artificial Reefs in the Gulf of Aqaba." Keynote speaker ASEZA Environment and Health Commissioner Dr. Bilal Bashir emphasized regional cooperation, comprehensive planning, and public participation in confronting environmental challenges. Eleven participants representing research institutions from Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Yemen, Egypt, Djibouti, and Jordan attended the workshop. End summary.

Jordan and Egypt Only Ones with Pilot Projects

2. Jordan and Egypt are the only Red Sea countries with artificial reef projects. By rehabilitating damaged reefs or creating new ones, these projects aim at preserving marine biodiversity and having positive economic and cultural impacts. Jordan's pilot project costs USD 30,000 and is fully funded by the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba (PERSGA - www.persga.org). Egypt's project is at a smaller scale and is funded by a company operating tourist submarines in the resort city of Hurghada on the Red Sea.

Adopt a Coral

3. The technique of the Jordan pilot project starts with designing cement blocks of different shapes, sizes and weights. These blocks are put in the sea in sandy areas so they will not affect existing corals. Coral larvae, moved by currents, attach themselves to the blocks, thus naturally creating new coral colonies. ASEZA also has a program for recreational divers called "adopt a coral sapling." The program uses coral saplings that grew on cans or tires that were taken out through clean-up campaigns. The corals are placed on small plastic pieces. Divers can take the coral via its plastic base and attach it to the underwater cement blocks.

Comment

4. Participants thought the pilot project was a success and they enthusiastically expressed their interest in having similar artificial reef projects in their countries. Participating countries are eagerly looking for funding from the U.S. and other donors for this work.

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